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AND
OTHER POEMS

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ALLYN AND BACON

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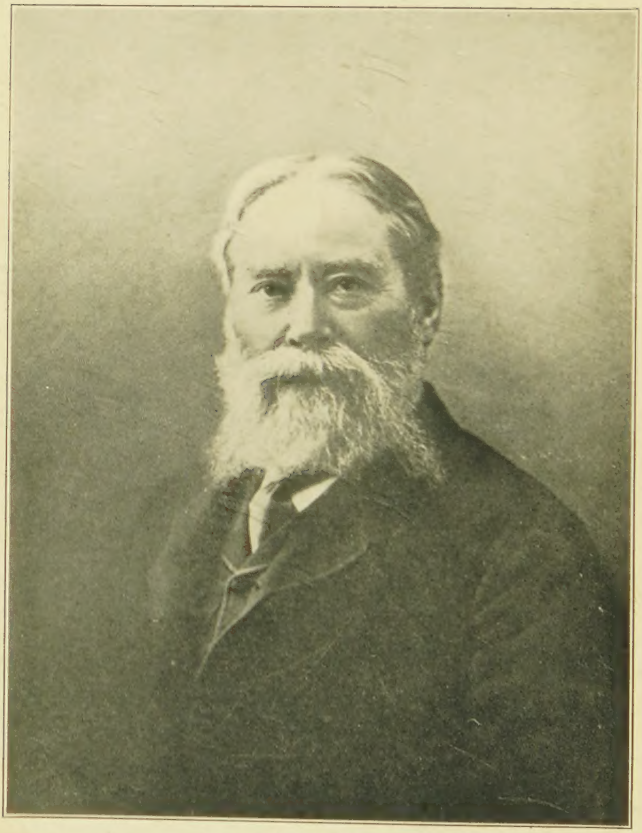

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

The Academy Series of English Classics

LOWELL

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL AND OTHER POEMS

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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ALLYN AND BACON

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INTRODUCTION.

Old Cambridge, in the thirties, was hedged about with the dignity that should surround the oldest seat of learning in America. Its intellectual atmosphere was undisturbed by the proximity of Boston; the struggle of the world of business and politics was far away; it was distinctively the center of literary culture. The traditions of the academic town were always inspiring to youth. In 1834, when Lowell entered Harvard, there was, in addition, the stimulus of men of a new stamp among the college dons — men of warm hearts and keen sympathies as well as of high scholarship, men who demolished the barrier of ice which precedent had established between professor and "scholar," and, coming into close touch with the undergraduates, quickened and warmed their natures and implanted among them a deep love for literature and the literary life.

Lowell entered the college at the age of fifteen. The student world then cared little for politics or current affairs; hardly a ripple of interest was stirred by the November state elections. Perhaps not five men in the college saw a daily paper. Longfellow, fresh from European travel and study, began, in 1836, his long career as Smith Professor of Modern Literature. Dr. Hale describes his presence as a benediction to the college. Young as he was, he had achieved an enviable position as a writer, which,

combined with the charm of his personality and the inspiration of his love for letters, made his influence largely responsible for the prevailing devotion to literary culture. Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats were the fashion. Young blood tingled with enthusiasm as each new volume of poems was reprinted from the English editions. Tennyson's earlier poems could not be bought, but a borrowed copy went the rounds of the college. "Everybody who had any sense knew that a great poet had been born, as well as we know it now." Such an atmosphere fosters creative effort; it is but a step from appreciation to imitation. A considerable group of students, plastic to such influences, endeavored to realize in themselves their poet ideals, in thought, action, and the written word. Lowell, from his freshman year, had been something of a free-lance, irritating his instructors by an indifference to the requirements of the prescribed courses, which he made little effort to subdue. His heart was set upon wide digressions in study, upon chance reading, upon much composition, upon animated literary discussions with fellow-members of Alpha Delta Phi, the secret society founded in defiance to the ban of the college. Perhaps this society in some way controlled the appointment of the editors of the college magazine, or, it may be, that it had gathered to it the men of the strongest native gift for writing. The five editors of Lowell's senior year were all Alpha Deltas, — Rufus King, George Warren Lippitt, Woodman Scates, Nathan Hale, Jr., and James Russell Lowell.

The poems published in the *Harvardiana* before and during this year of editorship gained for Lowell his classmates' recognition of his literary abilities, and brought him the honors of "class poet," without a rival and without a dis-

senting voice. It is interesting to note that the poem from the same pen which in after years so stirred the North with the *Biglow Papers*, was a stinging satire on the abolitionists, and that it was not delivered in person or by proxy, but was put before the students of the college in the columns of the *Harvardiana*. Lowell's long indifference to college discipline had resulted in his being "rusticated" for the six weeks ending commencement day. Dr. Hale says, in his reminiscences of Lowell, that when the news of the class honor and of the college punishment reached Dr. Lowell in Rome, he relieved his impatience with, "Oh, dear! James promised me that he would quit writing poetry, and would go to work."

Perhaps family tradition held letters in less repute than the law. Possibly Lowell himself, though not in the least doubt as to the selection of his calling, if his tastes alone were to be consulted, felt that even a meager support, as a man of letters, was doubtful. The argument for the serious professions prevailed. He plunged into the study of Blackstone, was admitted to the bar, and in 1840 "hung out his shingle." *My First Client* is a humorous description of his awakening from dreams of business to the fact that the man who stood before him, whose cause, in his fancy, he was eloquently to plead, was a sign painter, come to collect his bill. His brief struggle for clients was never very keen. Much of his time was given to writing, many of his contributions of this date appearing in the *Boston Miscellany*, a magazine started by his classmate, Nathan Hale, Jr., in 1842.

As was to be expected, Lowell abandoned the law, and, with Robert Carter as an associate, ventured upon the publication of the *Pioneer* (1842). The elegant N. P. Willis,

the arbiter of young literary reputations, found in the editor's effort little to herald as promising: "J. R. Lowell, a man of original and decided genius, has started a magazine in Boston. The first number lies before me, and it justifies our expectations, namely, that a man of genius is a very unfit editor for a periodical." Later in life his work with the *Atlantic* and the *North American Review* proved him "perhaps the best literary editor whom the history of American journalism has yet discovered."

His love for Maria White strengthened Lowell's ardor for poetry, and caused him to collect many of his fugitive pieces, which, with other unpublished poems, he put forth in 1841, under the title of *A Year's Life*. He was but twenty-two years of age; his life had not been warmed with long contact with his fellow-men; he knew little of life's real struggles; he had as yet but half-formed convictions; his sympathies were keenly literary, not deeply emotional; it was but natural that some of these early poems should be crude, yet there were some that presaged the dawn of his genius.

An income from his own labor was assured in a small way by an arrangement with the *Standard*, a weekly anti-slavery journal published in New York, and by lecturing at five dollars per night. With the important question of support settled, Lowell married in 1844. His wife's influence added to his keen intellect the fire of emotions deeply stirred. Through her the bigness of his nature was aroused, and he became active in the discussion of the great questions of right and wrong and justice that were agitating the North and South in connection with slavery.

The first volume of the *Biglow Papers* (1848) was a collection of poems directed with satiric fervor against the

politicians, north and south, who, in the interest of increased slave territory, were rushing the country into the Mexican War. This effort seemed iniquitous to Lowell's New England conscience. Convictions now came in abundance, and were voiced with no uncertain sound. The poet was not upon the popular side; the events of later years have shown us that his judgment was at fault, and that the war was a necessary step to the ultimate settlement of the slavery question. Yet common sense, high principle, and pungent sarcasm made these papers powerful as polemics, and won the hearts of Northern people. The *Biglow Papers*, however, have a value independent of the issues which called them into being. The weapon for the conflict came to the poet's hand unsought; he used it with impassioned vigor, with no intent to create enduring literature. The *Canterbury Tales* are valuable as a study of the life and manners of Chaucer's times; like these, the *Biglow Papers* portray the character and convictions, the clothes and queer dialect, of the New England farmer, his hard-headedness, his Calvinistic creed, his cheery wit and stern force. It was a surprise to the poet that these poems caught the attention of England, and won for him enduring reputation abroad. Lowell was a New England man of pure stock; he realized in himself perhaps the best that conditions of New England climate, culture, and religion might produce. He could not be the descendant of generations of lawyers and ministers, "the Brahmin class of New England," and fail of a strong influence upon his countrymen; he stamped himself upon the times from the very law of his being.

The same year that the *Biglow Papers* were published as a collected volume, *A Fable for Critics* appeared. Following in a degree the example of Byron, in *English Bards and*

Scotch Reviewers, yet without malevolence, he laid bare the foibles in the character and writing of the men of the Athenian Age of New England. His criticism was not all tilting at vanities, nor was his vision obscured by the nearness of his view. His analysis of Whittier, Bryant, Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, and even of "that fellow Lowell" was early evidence of his insight and power as a literary critic. These judgments of half a century ago have stood Time's test and are substantially the opinions of to-day.

This, too, was the year of *The Vision of Sir Launfal* (1848). Inspired by the beauty of the Arthurian Legends, stirred deeply by the great lesson to man, which he saw in and around the dim story, and possessed for months with the idea as the theme for a great narrative poem, Lowell, like the prophets of old, seemed suddenly wrapped in a frenzy. Shut up in his study for two days and nights, almost without food or rest, he shaped his thought; with little revision, as was his habit in composition, it was put forth to set the high-water mark of his poetic genius.

It was fitting that when Longfellow resigned the Smith professorship, in 1856, Lowell, who had already shown the breadth of his scholarship, the acuteness of his critical faculties, and the completeness of his equipment, should succeed to the chair of Modern Languages in Harvard. For many years after this appointment, his surroundings were almost ideal: Elmwood was the beautiful home of his birth; Cambridge was still the best center of literary culture; in and about Boston were many American men of letters; the routine work of the college was not irksome, nor were his duties such as to impede his own studies or his activity through his writings in a cause to which he was devoted. It was during this period that much of his criti-

cal prose was produced: *Fireside Travels*, in 1864; *Among my Books*, 1870; *My Study Windows*, 1871; *Democracy and Other Addresses*, 1886.

From 1857 to 1861, as editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, he was associated with Oliver Wendell Holmes; in fact, Lowell was not willing to undertake the editorship without the agreement that the "Boston Poet" should be a contributor. *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, the literary success of the magazine, resulted from this association. Lowell's own contributions were chiefly political, but his work as a writer was overshadowed by his devoted toil as an editor. From 1863 to 1877 he successfully conducted the *North American Review*. These years of editorship broadened his sympathies, enriched his character, made him widely known, gave him a deeper insight into the hearts of men, and made him a stronger national force. Much that made him the successful diplomat in Spain and England was without doubt due to the business training and political strength acquired while associated with the *Atlantic* and the *North American Review*.

The second series of *Biglow Papers* was collected and published in 1867. The feelings which stirred Lowell at the epoch of the war with Mexico were passionate convictions in the days of civil strife. That the *Papers* were the work of a self-confessed humorist detracted nothing from their strength; their wit was powerful, their ridicule scorching. The poems were in everybody's mouth, and were rightly considered, in spite of their lighter vein, to be most potent forces in the stirring literature of the period. The war poems, with others, including the noble *Commemoration Ode*, delivered at Harvard in 1865, were published in 1869, with the title *Under the Willows*.

During the Hayes administration, four foreign missions were offered to Lowell; he accepted the appointment to Spain, and, in 1877, began his diplomatic life at the court of Alfonso XII. In 1880 he was transferred from Madrid to the Court of St. James. With much tact he effected the social conquest of the English people, becoming a great favorite, both as a man of culture and as a man of letters. By energy and devotion to his ministerial duties he won the admiration of his own countrymen and the respect of all Great Britain. He was never less of an American, through the temptations to truckle to old-world prejudice against our democratic ideals. His four years of service did much to establish in England the belief in the existence of the ideal American, — a man of all the social graces, coupled with scholarly culture and sterling character.

After his return to his Cambridge home, the declining years of his life were given to the revision of his prose works. Many of the essays and addresses delivered in England were included in *Democracy* (1886). *Political Essays* was published in 1888; and, in the last year of his life, at the age of seventy-two, he put forth *Latest Literary Essays*, which was followed, in 1892, after his death, by *The Old English Dramatists.*

"How enviable the record of a poet who is our most brilliant and learned critic, and who has given us our best native idyl, our best and most complete work in dialectic verse, and the noblest heroic ode that America has produced, — each and all ranking with the first of their kinds in English literature of the modern time." — STEDMAN.

SELECTIONS FROM JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

SELECTIONS FROM LOWELL.

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL.

PRELUDE TO PART FIRST.

Over his keys the musing organist,
  Beginning doubtfully and far away,
First lets his fingers wander as they list,
  And builds a bridge from Dreamland for his lay:
Then, as the touch of his loved instrument 5
  Gives hope and fervor, nearer draws his theme,
First guessed by faint auroral flushes sent
  Along the wavering vista of his dream.

Not only around our infancy
Doth heaven with all its splendors lie; 10
Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,
We Sinais climb and know it not.
Over our manhood bend the skies;
  Against our fallen and traitor lives
The great winds utter prophecies: 15
  With our faint hearts the mountain strives;
Its arms outstretched, the druid wood
  Waits with its benedicite;
And to our age's drowsy blood
  Still shouts the inspiring sea. 20

Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us;
  The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in.
The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives us,
  We bargain for the graves we lie in;
At the Devil's booth are all things sold, 25
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;
  For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking:
  'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
'Tis only God may be had for the asking; 30
No price is set on the lavish summer;
June may be had by the poorest comer.

And what is so rare as a day in June?
  Then, if ever, come perfect days;
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune, 35
  And over it softly her warm ear lays:
Whether we look, or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;
Every clod feels a stir of might,
  An instinct within it that reaches and towers, 40
And, groping blindly above it for light,
  Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers;
The flush of life may well be seen
  Thrilling back over hills and valleys;
The cowslip startles in meadows green, 45
  The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,
And there's never a leaf nor a blade too mean
  To be some happy creature's palace;
The little bird sits at his door in the sun,
  Atilt like a blossom among the leaves, 50
And lets his illumined being o'errun

With the deluge of summer it receives;
His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;
He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest, — 55
In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best?

Now is the high-tide of the year,
And whatever of life hath ebbed away
Comes flooding back with a ripply cheer,
Into every bare inlet and creek and bay; 60
Now the heart is so full that a drop overfills it,
We are happy now because God wills it;
No matter how barren the past may have been,
'Tis enough for us now that the leaves are green;
We sit in the warm shade and feel right well 65
How the sap creeps up and the blossoms swell;
We may shut our eyes, but we cannot help knowing
That skies are clear and grass is growing;
The breeze comes whispering in our ear,
That dandelions are blossoming near, 70
That maize has sprouted, that streams are flowing,
That the river is bluer than the sky,
That the robin is plastering his house hard by;
And if the breeze kept the good news back,
For other couriers we should not lack; 75
We could guess it all by yon heifer's lowing. —
And hark! how clear bold chanticleer,
Warmed with the new wine of the year,
Tells all in his lusty crowing!

Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how: 80
Everything is happy now,

Everything is upward striving;
'Tis as easy now for the heart to be true
As for grass to be green or skies to be blue, —
'Tis the natural way of living: 85
Who knows whither the clouds have fled?
In the unscarred heaven they leave no wake;
And the eyes forget the tears they have shed,
The heart forgets its sorrow and ache;
The soul partakes of the season's youth, 90
And the sulphurous rifts of passion and woe
Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and smooth,
Like burnt-out craters healed with snow.
What wonder if Sir Launfal now
Remembered the keeping of his vow? 95

PART FIRST.

I.

"My golden spurs now bring to me,
And bring to me my richest mail,
For to-morrow I go over land and sea
In search of the Holy Grail;
Shall never a bed for me be spread, 100
Nor shall a pillow be under my head,
Till I begin my vow to keep;
Here on the rushes will I sleep,
And perchance there may come a vision true
Ere day create the world anew." 105
Slowly Sir Launfal's eyes grew dim,
Slumber fell like a cloud on him,
And into his soul the vision flew.

II.

The crows flapped over by twos and threes,
In the pool drowsed the cattle up to their knees, 110
  The little birds sang as if it were
  The one day of summer in all the year,
And the very leaves seemed to sing on the trees:
The castle alone in the landscape lay
Like an outpost of winter, dull and gray: 115
'Twas the proudest hall in the North Countree,
And never its gates might opened be,
Save to lord or lady of high degree;
Summer besieged it on every side,
But the churlish stone her assaults defied; 120
She could not scale the chilly wall,
Though around it for leagues her pavilions tall
Stretched left and right,
Over the hills and out of sight;
  Green and broad was every tent, 125
  And out of each a murmur went
Till the breeze fell off at night.

III.

The drawbridge dropped with a surly clang,
And through the dark arch a charger sprang,
Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden knight, 130
In his gilded mail, that flamed so bright
It seemed the dark castle had gathered all
Those shafts the fierce sun had shot over its wall
  In his siege of three hundred summers long,
And, binding them all in one blazing sheaf, 135
  Had cast them forth: so, young and strong,
And lightsome as a locust-leaf,

Sir Launfal flashed forth in his unscarred mail,
To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail.

IV.

It was morning on hill and stream and tree, 140
And morning in the young knight's heart;
Only the castle moodily
Rebuffed the gifts of the sunshine free,
And gloomed by itself apart;
The season brimmed all other things up 145
Full as the rain fills the pitcher-plant's cup.

V.

As Sir Launfal made morn through the darksome gate,
He was 'ware of a leper, crouched by the same,
Who begged with his hand and moaned as he sate;
And a loathing over Sir Launfal came: 150
The sunshine went out of his soul with a thrill,
The flesh 'neath his armor 'gan shrink and crawl,
And midway its leap his heart stood still
Like a frozen waterfall;
For this man, so foul and bent of stature, 155
Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,
And seemed the one blot on the summer morn —
So he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn.

VI.

The leper raised not the gold from the dust:
"Better to me the poor man's crust, 160
Better the blessing of the poor,
Though I turn me empty from his door;
That is no true alms which the hand can hold;

He gives nothing but worthless gold
  Who gives from a sense of duty; 165
But he who gives but a slender mite,
And gives to that which is out of sight,
  That thread of the all-sustaining Beauty
Which runs through all and doth all unite, —
The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms, 170
The heart outstretches its eager palms,
For a god goes with it and makes it store
To the soul that was starving in darkness before."

PRELUDE TO PART SECOND.

Down swept the chill wind from the mountain peak,
  From the snow five thousand summers old; 175
On open wold and hill-top bleak
  It had gathered all the cold,
And whirled it like sleet on the wanderer's cheek;
It carried a shiver everywhere
From the unleafed boughs and pastures bare; 180
The little brook heard it and built a roof
'Neath which he could house him, winter-proof;
All night by the white stars' frosty gleams
He groined his arches and matched his beams;
Slender and clear were his crystal spars 185
As the lashes of light that trim the stars;
He sculptured every summer delight
In his halls and chambers out of sight;
Sometimes his tinkling waters slipt
Down through a frost-leaved forest-crypt, 190
Long, sparkling aisles of steel-stemmed trees

Bending to counterfeit a breeze;
Sometimes the roof no fretwork knew
But silvery mosses that downward grew;
Sometimes it was carved in sharp relief 195
With quaint arabesques of ice-fern leaf;
Sometimes it was simply smooth and clear
For the gladness of heaven to shine through, and here
He had caught the nodding bulrush-tops
And hung them thickly with diamond-drops, 200
That crystalled the beams of moon and sun,
And made a star of every one:
No mortal builder's most rare device
Could match this winter-palace of ice;
'Twas as if every image that mirrored lay 205
In his depths serene through the summer day,
Each fleeting shadow of earth and sky,
Lest the happy model should be lost,
Had been mimicked in fairy masonry
By the elfin builders of the frost. 210

Within the hall are song and laughter,
The cheeks of Christmas grow red and jolly,
And sprouting is every corbel and rafter
With lightsome green of ivy and holly;
Through the deep gulf of the chimney wide 215
Wallows the Yule-log's roaring tide;
The broad flame-pennons droop and flap
And belly and tug as a flag in the wind;
Like a locust shrills the imprisoned sap,
Hunted to death in its galleries blind; 220
And swift little troops of silent sparks,
Now pausing, now scattering away as in fear,

Go threading the soot-forest's tangled darks
  Like herds of startled deer.
But the wind without was eager and sharp, 225
Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a harp,
    And rattles and wrings
    The icy strings,
  Singing, in dreary monotone,
  A Christmas carol of its own, 230
Whose burden still, as he might guess,
Was — "Shelterless, shelterless, shelterless!"
The voice of the seneschal flared like a torch
As he shouted the wanderer away from the porch,
And he sat in the gateway and saw all night 235
  The great hall-fire, so cheery and bold,
  Through the window-slits of the castle old,
Build out its piers of ruddy light
  Against the drift of the cold.

PART SECOND

I.

THERE was never a leaf on bush or tree, 240
The bare boughs rattled shudderingly;
The river was dumb and could not speak,
  For the weaver Winter its shroud had spun,
A single crow on the tree-top bleak
  From his shining feathers shed off the cold sun; 245
Again it was morning, but shrunk and cold,
As if her veins were sapless and old,
And she rose up decrepitly
For a last dim look at earth and sea.

II.

Sir Launfal turned from his own hard gate, 250
For another heir in his earldom sate;
An old, bent man, worn out and frail,
He came back from seeking the Holy Grail,
Little he recked of his earldom's loss,
No more on his surcoat was blazoned the cross, 255
But deep in his soul the sign he wore,
The badge of the suffering and the poor.

III.

Sir Launfal's raiment thin and spare
Was idle mail 'gainst the barbed air,
For it was just at the Christmas time; 260
So he mused, as he sat, of a sunnier clime,
And sought for a shelter from cold and snow
In the light and warmth of long-ago;
He sees the snake-like caravan crawl
O'er the edge of the desert, black and small, 265
Then nearer and nearer, till, one by one,
He can count the camels in the sun,
As over the red-hot sands they pass
To where, in its slender necklace of grass,
The little spring laughed and leapt in the shade, 270
And with its own self like an infant played,
And waved its signal of palms.

IV.

"For Christ's sweet sake, I beg an alms;" —
The happy camels may reach the spring,
But Sir Launfal sees only the grewsome thing, 275

The leper, lank as the rain-blanched bone,
That cowers beside him, a thing as lone
And white as the ice-isles of Northern seas
In the desolate horror of his disease.

V.

And Sir Launfal said, — "I behold in thee 280
An image of Him who died on the tree;
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns, —
Thou also hast had the world's buffets and scorns, —
And to thy life were not denied
The wounds in the hands and feet and side: 285
Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me;
Behold, through him, I give to Thee!"

VI.

Then the soul of the leper stood up in his eyes
And looked at Sir Launfal, and straightway he
Remembered in what a haughtier guise 290
He had flung an alms to leprosie,
When he girt his young life up in gilded mail
And set forth in search of the Holy Grail.
The heart within him was ashes and dust;
He parted in twain his single crust, 295
He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,
And gave the leper to eat and drink:
'Twas a mouldy crust of coarse brown bread,
'Twas water out of a wooden bowl, —
Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed, 300
And 'twas red wine he drank with his thirsty soul.

VII.

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,
A light shone round about the place;
The leper no longer crouched at his side,
But stood before him glorified, 305
But shining and tall and fair and straight
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate, —
Himself the Gate whereby men can
Enter the temple of God in Man.

VIII.

His words were shed softer than leaves from the pine, 310
And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the brine,
That mingle their softness and quiet in one
With the shaggy unrest they float down upon;
And the voice that was calmer than silence said,
"Lo it is I, be not afraid! 315
In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold, it is here, — this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for Me but now;
This crust is My body broken for thee, 320
This water His blood that died on the tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need:
Not what we give, but what we share, —
For the gift without the giver is bare; 325
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three, —
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me."

IX.

Sir Launfal awoke as from a swound: —
"The Grail in my castle here is found!

Hang my idle armor up on the wall, 330
Let it be the spider's banquet-hall;
He must be fenced with stronger mail
Who would seek and find the Holy Grail.

X.

The castle gate stands open now,
And the wanderer is welcome to the hall 335
As the hangbird is to the elm-tree bough;
No longer scowl the turrets tall,
The Summer's long siege at last is o'er;
When the first poor outcast went in at the door,
She entered with him in disguise, 340
And mastered the fortress by surprise;
There is no spot she loves so well on ground,
She lingers and smiles there the whole year round;
The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's land
Has hall and bower at his command; 345
And there's no poor man in the North Countree
But is lord of the earldom as much as he.

SUMMER STORM.

UNTREMULOUS in the river clear,
Toward the sky's image, hangs the imaged bridge;
So still the air that I can hear
The slender clarion of the unseen midge;
Out of the stillness, with a gathering creep, 5
Like rising wind in leaves, which now decreases,
Now lulls, now swells, and all the while increases,
The huddling trample of a drove of sheep
Tilts the loose planks, and then as gradually ceases
In dust on the other side; life's emblem deep, 10
A confused noise between two silences,
Finding at last in dust precarious peace.
On the wide marsh the purple-blossomed grasses
Soak up the sunshine; sleeps the brimming tide,
Save when the wedge-shaped wake in silence passes 15
Of some slow water rat, whose sinuous glide
Wavers the long green sedge's shade from side to side;
But up the west, like a rock-shivered surge,
Climbs a great cloud edged with sun-whitened spray;
Huge whirls of foam boil toppling o'er its verge, 20
And falling still it seems, and yet it climbs alway.

Suddenly all the sky is hid
As with the shutting of a lid,
One by one great drops are falling
Doubtful and slow, 25
Down the pane they are crookedly crawling,
And the wind breathes low;
Slowly the circles widen on the river,

Widen and mingle, one and all;
Here and there the slenderer flowers shiver, 30
Struck by an icy raindrop's fall.

Now on the hills I hear the thunder mutter,
The wind is gathering in the west;
The upturned leaves first whiten and flutter,
Then droop to a fitful rest; 35
Up from the stream with sluggish flap
Struggles the gull and floats away;
Nearer and nearer rolls the thunder-clap, —
We shall not see the sun go down to-day;
Now leaps the wind on the sleepy marsh 40
And tramples the grass with terrified feet,
The startled river turns leaden and harsh.
You can hear the quick heart of the tempest beat.

Look! look! that vivid flash!
And instantly follows the rattling thunder, 45
As if some cloud-crag, split asunder,
Fell, splintering with a ruinous crash,
On the Earth, which crouches in silence under;
And now a solid gray wall of rain
Shuts off the landscape, mile by mile; 50
For a breath's space I see the blue wood again,
And ere the next heart-beat, the wind-hurled pile,
That seemed but now a league aloof,
Bursts crackling o'er the sun-parched roof;
Against the windows the storm comes dashing, 55
Through tattered foliage the hail tears crashing,
The blue lightning flashes,
The rapid hail clashes,

The white waves are tumbling,
And, in one baffled roar, 60
Like the toothless sea mumbling
A rock-bristled shore,
The thunder is rumbling
And crashing and crumbling, —
Will silence return nevermore? 65

Hush! Still as death,
The tempest holds his breath
As from a sudden will;
The rain stops short, but from the eaves
You see it drop, and hear it from the leaves, 70
All is so bodingly still;
Again, now, now, again,
Plashes the rain in heavy gouts,
The crinkled lightning
Seems ever brightening, 75
And loud and long
Again the thunder shouts
His battle-song, —
One quivering flash,
One wildering crash, 80
Followed by silence dead and dull,
As if the cloud let go,
Leapt bodily below
To whelm the earth in one mad overthrow,
And then a total lull. 85

Gone, gone, so soon!
No more my half-crazed fancy there
Can shape a giant in the air,

No more I see his streaming hair,
The writhing portent of his form; 90
The pale and quiet moon
Makes her calm forehead bare,
And the last fragments of the storm,
Like shattered rigging from a fight at sea,
Silent and few, are drifting over me. 95

ALLEGRA.

I WOULD more natures were like thine,
That never casts a glance before, —
Thou Hebe, who thy heart's bright wine
So lavishly to all dost pour,
That we who drink forget to pine, 5
And can but dream of bliss in store.

Thou canst not see a shade in life;
With sunward instinct thou dost rise,
And, leaving clouds below at strife,
Gazest undazzled at the skies, 10
With all their blazing splendors rife,
A songful lark with eagle's eyes.

Thou wast some foundling whom the Hours
Nursed, laughing, with the milk of Mirth;
Some influence more gay than ours 15
Hath ruled thy nature from its birth,
As if thy natal stars were flowers
That shook their seeds round thee on earth

And thou, to lull thine infant rest,
  Wast cradled like an Indian child; 20
All pleasant winds from south and west
  With lullabies thine ears beguiled,
Rocking thee in thine oriole's nest,
  Till Nature looked at thee and smiled.

Thine every fancy seems to borrow 25
  A sunlight from thy childish years,
Making a golden cloud of sorrow,
  A hope-lit rainbow out of tears, —
Thy heart is certain of to-morrow,
  Though 'yond to-day it never peers. 30

I would more natures were like thine,
  So innocently wild and free,
Whose sad thoughts, even, leap and shine,
  Like sunny wavelets in the sea,
Making us mindless of the brine, 35
  In gazing on the brilliancy.

THE ROSE: A BALLAD.

I.

In his tower sat the poet
  Gazing on the roaring sea,
"Take this rose," he sighed, "and throw it
  Where there's none that loveth me.
On the rock the billow bursteth 5
  And sinks back into the seas,

But in vain my spirit thirsteth
  So to burst and be at ease.
Take, O sea! the tender blossom
  That hath lain against my breast; 10
On thy black and angry bosom
  It will find a surer rest.
Life is vain and love is hollow,
  Ugly death stands there behind,
Hate and scorn and hunger follow 15
  Him that toileth for his kind."
Forth into the night he hurled it,
  And with bitter smile did mark
How the surly tempest whirled it
  Swift into the hungry dark. 20
Foam and spray drive back to leeward,
  And the gale, with dreary moan,
Drifts the helpless blossom seaward,
  Through the breakers all alone.

II.

Stands a maiden, on the morrow, 25
  Musing by the wave-beat strand,
Half in hope and half in sorrow,
  Tracing words upon the sand;
"Shall I ever then behold him
  Who hath been my life so long, — 30
Ever to this sick heart fold him, —
  Be the spirit of his song?
Touch not, sea, the blessed letters
  I have traced upon thy shore,
Spare his name whose spirit fetters 35
  Mine with love forevermore!"

Swells the tide and overflows it
  But, with omen pure and meet,
Brings a little rose and throws it
  Humbly at the maiden's feet. 40
Full of bliss she takes the token,
  And, upon her snowy breast,
Soothes the ruffled petals broken
  With the ocean's fierce unrest.
"Love is thine, O heart! and surely 45
  Peace shall also be thine own,
For the heart that trusteth purely
  Never long can pine alone."

III.

In his tower sits the poet,
  Blisses new and strange to him 50
Fill his heart and overflow it
  With a wonder sweet and dim.
Up the beach the ocean slideth
  With a whisper of delight,
And the moon in silence glideth 55
  Through the peaceful blue of night.
Rippling o'er the poet's shoulder
  Flows a maiden's golden hair,
Maiden lips, with love grown bolder,
  Kiss his moon-lit forehead bare. 60
"Life is joy and love is power,
  Death all fetters doth unbind,
Strength and wisdom only flower
  When we toil for all our kind.
Hope is truth, — the future giveth 65
  More than present takes away,

And the soul forever liveth
  Nearer God from day to day."
Not a word the maiden uttered,
  Fullest hearts are slow to speak, 70
But a withered rose-leaf fluttered
  Down upon the poet's cheek.

RHŒCUS.

God sends his teachers unto every age,
To every clime, and every race of men,
With revelations fitted to their growth
And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of Truth
Into the selfish rule of one sole race: 5
Therefore each form of worship that hath swayed
The life of man, and given it to grasp
The master key of knowledge, reverence,
Infolds some germs of goodness and of right;
Else never had the eager soul, which loathes 10
The slothful down of pampered ignorance,
Found in it even a moment's fitful rest.

There is an instinct in the human heart
Which makes that all the fables it hath coined,
To justify the reign of its belief 15
And strengthen it by beauty's right divine,
Veil in their inner cells a mystic gift,
Which, like the hazel twig, in faithful hands,
Points surely to the hidden springs of truth.
For, as in nature naught is made in vain, 20
But all things have within their hull of use

A wisdom and a meaning which may speak
Of spiritual secrets to the ear
Of spirit; so, in whatsoe'er the heart
Hath fashioned for a solace to itself, 25
To make its inspirations suit its creed,
And from the niggard hands of falsehood wring
Its needful food of truth, there ever is
A sympathy with Nature, which reveals,
Not less than her own works, pure gleams of light 30
And earnest parables of inward lore.
Hear now this fairy legend of old Greece,
As full of freedom, youth, and beauty still
As the immortal freshness of that grace
Carved for all ages on some Attic frieze. 35

A youth named Rhœcus, wandering in the wood,
Saw an old oak just trembling to its fall,
And, feeling pity of so fair a tree,
He propped its gray trunk with admiring care,
And with a thoughtless footstep loitered on. 40
But, as he turned, he heard a voice behind
That murmured "Rhœcus!" 'Twas as if the leaves,
Stirred by a passing breath, had murmured it,
And while he paused bewildered, yet again
It murmured "Rhœcus!" softer than a breeze. 45
He started and beheld with dizzy eyes
What seemed the substance of a happy dream
Stand there before him, spreading a warm glow
Within the green glooms of the shadowy oak.
It seemed a woman's shape, yet all too fair 50
To be a woman, and with eyes too meek
For any that were wont to mate with gods.

All naked like a goddess stood she there,
And like a goddess all too beautiful
To feel the guilt-born earthliness of shame. 55
"Rhœcus, I am the Dryad of this tree,"
Thus she began dropping her low-toned words
Serene, and full, and clear, as drops of dew,
"And with it I am doomed to live and die;
The rain and sunshine are my caterers, 60
Nor have I other bliss than simple life;
Now ask me what thou wilt, that I can give,
And with a thankful joy it shall be thine."

Then Rhœcus, with a flutter at the heart,
Yet, by the prompting of such beauty, bold, 65
Answered: "What is there that can satisfy
The endless craving of the soul but love?
Give me thy love, or but the hope of that
Which must be evermore my nature's goal."
After a little pause she said again, 70
But with a glimpse of sadness in her tone,
"I give it, Rhœcus, though a perilous gift;
An hour before the sunset meet me here."
And straightway there was nothing he could see
But the green glooms beneath the shadowy oak, 75
And not a sound came to his straining ears
But the low trickling rustle of the leaves
And far away upon an emerald slope
The falter of an idle shepherd's pipe.

Now, in those days of simpleness and faith, 80
Men did not think that happy things were dreams
Because they overstepped the narrow bourn

Of likelihood, but reverently deemed
Nothing too wondrous or too beautiful
To be the guerdon of a daring heart. 85
So Rhœcus made no doubt that he was blest,
And all along unto the city's gate
Earth seemed to spring beneath him as he walked,
The clear, broad sky looked bluer than its wont,
And he could scarce believe he had not wings, 90
Such sunshine seemed to glitter through his veins
Instead of blood, so light he felt and strange.

Young Rhœcus had a faithful heart enough,
But one that in the present dwelt too much,
And, taking with blithe welcome whatsoe'er 95
Chance gave of joy, was wholly bound in that,
Like the contented peasant of a vale,
Deemed it the world, and never looked beyond.
So, haply meeting in the afternoon
Some comrades who were playing at the dice, 100
He joined them, and forgot all else beside.

The dice were rattling at the merriest,
And Rhœcus, who had met but sorry luck,
Just laughed in triumph at a happy throw, 104
When through the room there hummed a yellow bee
That buzzed about his ear with down-dropped legs
As if to light. And Rhœcus laughed and said,
Feeling how red and flushed he was with loss,
"By Venus! does he take me for a rose?"
And brushed him off with rough, impatient hand. 110
But still the bee came back, and thrice again
Rhœcus did beat him off with growing wrath.

Then through the window flew the wounded bee,
And Rhœcus tracking him with angry eyes,
Saw a sharp mountain-peak of Thessaly 115
Against the red disk of the setting sun, —
And instantly the blood sank from his heart,
As if its very walls had caved away.
Without a word he turned, and, rushing forth,
Ran madly through the city and the gate, 120
And o'er the plain, which now the wood's long shade,
By the low sun thrown forward broad and dim,
Darkened well-nigh unto the city's wall.

Quite spent and out of breath he reached the tree,
And, listening fearfully, he heard once more 125
The low voice murmur, "Rhœcus!" close at hand:
Whereat he looked around him, but could see
Naught but the deepening glooms beneath the oak.
Then sighed the voice, "O Rhœcus! nevermore
Shalt thou behold me or by day or night, 130
Me, who would fain have blessed thee with a love
More ripe and bounteous than ever yet
Filled up with nectar any mortal heart;
But thou didst scorn my humble messenger,
And sent'st him back to me with bruised wings. 135
We spirits only show to gentle eyes,
We ever ask an undivided love,
And he who scorns the least of Nature's works
Is thenceforth exiled and shut out from all.
Farewell! For thou canst never see me more." 140

Then Rhœcus beat his breast, and groaned aloud,
And cried, "Be pitiful! forgive me yet

This once, and I shall never need it more!"
"Alas!" the voice returned, "'tis thou art blind,
Not I unmerciful; I can forgive, 145
But have no skill to heal thy spirit's eyes;
Only the soul hath power o'er itself."
With that again there murmured "Nevermore!"
And Rhœcus after heard no other sound,
Except the rattling of the oak's crisp leaves, 150
Like the long surf upon a distant shore,
Raking the sea-worn pebbles up and down.
The night had gathered round him; o'er the plain
The city sparkled with its thousand lights,
And sounds of revel fell upon his ear 155
Harshly and like a curse; above the sky,
With all its bright sublimity of stars,
Deepened, and on his forehead smote the breeze;
Beauty was all around him and delight,
But from that eve he was alone on earth. 160

TO A PINE TREE.

Far up on Katahdin thou towerest,
Purple-blue with the distance and vast;
Like a cloud o'er the lowlands thou lowerest,
That hangs poised on a lull in the blast,
To its fall leaning awful. 5

In the storm, like a prophet o'ermaddened,
Thou singest and tossest thy branches;
Thy heart with the terror is gladdened,

Thou forebodest the dread avalanches,
  When whole mountains swoop valeward. 10

In the calm thou o'erstretchest the valleys
  With thine arms, as if blessings imploring,
Like an old king led forth from his palace,
  When his people to battle are pouring
    From the city beneath him. 15

To the lumberer asleep 'neath thy glooming
  Thou dost sing of wild billows in motion,
Till he longs to be swung mid their booming
  In the tents of the Arabs of ocean,
    Whose finned isles are their cattle. 20

For the gale snatches thee for his lyre,
  With mad hand crashing melody frantic,
While he pours forth his mighty desire
  To leap down on the eager Atlantic,
    Whose arms stretch to his playmate. 25

The wild storm makes his lair in thy branches,
  Preying thence on the continent under;
Like a lion, crouched close on his haunches,
  There awaiteth his leap the fierce thunder,
    Growling low with impatience. 30

Spite of winter, thou keep'st thy green glory,
  Lusty father of Titans past number!
The snowflakes alone make thee hoary,
  Nestling close to thy branches in slumber,
    And thee mantling with silence. 35

Thou alone knowest the splendor of winter
  Mid thy snow-silvered, hushed precipices,
Hearing crags of green ice groan and splinter,
  And then plunge down the muffled abysses
    In the quiet of midnight. 40

Thou alone knowest the glory of summer,
  Gazing down on thy broad seas of forest,
On thy subjects that send a proud murmur
  Up to thee, to their sachem, who towerest
    From thy bleak throne to heaven. 45

TO THE PAST.

Wondrous and awful are thy silent halls,
    O kingdom of the past!
There lie the bygone ages in their palls,
    Guarded by shadows vast;
  There all is hushed and breathless, 5
Save when some image of old error falls
  Earth worshipped once as deathless.

There sits drear Egypt, mid beleaguering sands,
    Half woman and half beast,
The burnt-out torch within her mouldering hands 10
    That once lit all the East;
  A dotard bleared and hoary,
There Asser crouches o'er the blackened brands
  Of Asia's long-quenched glory.

Still as a city buried 'neath the sea, 15
Thy courts and temples stand;
Idle as forms on wind-waved tapestry
Of saints and heroes grand,
Thy phantasms grope and shiver,
Or watch the loose shores crumbling silently 20
Into Time's gnawing river.

Titanic shapes with faces blank and dun,
Of their old godhead lorn,
Gaze on the embers of the sunken sun,
Which they misdeem for morn; 25
And yet the eternal sorrow
In their unmonarched eyes says day is done
Without the hope of morrow.

O realm of silence and of swart eclipse,
The shapes that haunt thy gloom 30
Make signs to us and move their withered lips
Across the gulf of doom;
Yet all their sound and motion
Bring no more freight to us than wraiths of ships
On the mirage's ocean. 35

And if sometimes a moaning wandereth
From out thy desolate halls,
If some grim shadow of thy living death
Across our sunshine falls
And scares the world to error, 40
The eternal life sends forth melodious breath
To chase the misty terror.

SIOUX CITY, IOWA

Thy mighty clamors, wars, and world-noised deeds
  Are silent now in dust,
Gone like a tremble of the huddling reeds 45
  Beneath some sudden gust;
 Thy forms and creeds have vanished,
Tossed out to wither like unsightly weeds
 From the world's garden banished.

Whatever of true life there was in thee 50
  Leaps in our age's veins;
Wield still thy bent and wrinkled empery,
  And shake thine idle chains; —
 To thee thy dross is clinging,
For us thy martyrs die, thy prophets see, 55
 Thy poets still are singing.

Here, mid the bleak waves of our strife and care,
  Float the green Fortunate Isles
Where all thy hero-spirits dwell, and share
  Our martyrdoms and toils; 60
 The present moves attended
With all of brave and excellent and fair
 That made the old time splendid.

THE OAK.

What gnarled stretch, what depth of shade, is his!
  There needs no crown to mark the forest's king;
How in his leaves outshines full summer's bliss!
  Sun, storm, rain, dew, to him their tribute bring,
Which he with such benignant royalty 5
  Accepts, as overpayeth what is lent;
All nature seems his vassal proud to be,
  And cunning only for his ornament.

How towers he, too, amid the billowed snows,
  An unquelled exile from the summer's throne, 10
Whose plain, uncinctured front more kingly shows,
  Now that the obscuring courtier leaves are flown.
His boughs make music of the winter air,
  Jewelled with sleet, like some cathedral front
Where clinging snow-flakes with quaint art repair 15
  The dints and furrows of time's envious brunt.

How doth his patient strength the rude March wind
  Persuade to seem glad breaths of summer breeze,
And win the soil that fain would be unkind,
  To swell his revenues with proud increase! 20
He is the gem; and all the landscape wide
  (So doth his grandeur isolate the sense)
Seems but the setting, worthless all beside,
  An empty socket, were he fallen thence.

So, from oft converse with life's wintry gales, 25
  Should man learn how to clasp with tougher roots

The inspiring earth; how otherwise avails
  The leaf-creating sap that sunward shoots?
So every year that falls with noiseless flake
  Should fill old scars up on the stormward side, 30
And make hoar age revered for age's sake,
  Not for traditions of youth's leafy pride.

So, from the pinched soil of a churlish fate,
  True hearts compel the sap of sturdier growth,
So between earth and heaven stand simply great, 35
  That these shall seem but their attendants both;
For nature's forces with obedient zeal
  Wait on the rooted faith and oaken will;
As quickly the pretender's cheat they feel,
  And turn mad Pucks to flout and mock him still. 40

Lord, all thy works are lessons; each contains
  Some emblem of man's all-containing soul;
Shall he make fruitless all thy glorious pains,
  Delving within thy grace an eyeless mole?
Make me the least of thy Dodona-grove, 45
  Cause me some message of thy truth to bring,
Speak but a word through me, nor let thy love
  Among my boughs disdain to perch and sing.

THE BIRCH TREE.

RIPPLING through thy branches goes the sunshine,
Among thy leaves that palpitate forever;
Ovid in thee a pining Nymph had prisoned,
The soul once of some tremulous inland river,
Quivering to tell her woe, but, ah! dumb, dumb forever! 5

While all the forest, witched with slumberous moonshine,
Holds up its leaves in happy, happy silence,
Waiting the dew, with breath and pulse suspended,
I hear afar thy whispering, gleamy islands,
And track thee wakeful still amid the wide-hung silence. 10

Upon the brink of some wood-nestled lakelet,
Thy foliage, like the tresses of a Dryad,
Dripping about thy slim white stem, whose shadow
Slopes quivering down the water's dusky quiet,
Thou shrink'st as on her bath's edge would some startled
Dryad. 15

Thou art the go-between of rustic lovers;
Thy white bark has their secrets in its keeping;
Reuben writes here the happy name of Patience,
And thy lithe boughs hang murmuring and weeping
Above her, as she steals the mystery from thy keeping 20

Thou art to me like my beloved maiden,
So frankly coy, so full of trembly confidences;
Thy shadow scarce seems shade, thy pattering leaflets
Sprinkle their gathered sunshine o'er my senses,
And Nature gives me all her summer confidences. 25

Whether my heart with hope or sorrow tremble,
Thou sympathizest still; wild and unquiet,
I fling me down; thy ripple, like a river,
Flows valleyward, where calmness is, and by it
My heart is floated down into the land of quiet. 30

TO THE DANDELION.

Dear common flower, that grow'st beside the way,
Fringing the dusty road with harmless gold,
First pledge of blithesome May,
Which children pluck, and, full of pride uphold,
High-hearted buccaneers, o'erjoyed that they 5
An Eldorado in the grass have found,
Which not the rich earth's ample round
May match in wealth, thou art more dear to me
Than all the prouder summer-blooms may be.

Gold such as thine ne'er drew the Spanish prow 10
Through the primeval hush of Indian seas,
Nor wrinkl·d the lean brow
Of age, to rob the lover's heart of ease;
'Tis the Spring's largess, which she scatters now
To rich and poor alike, with lavish hand, 15
Though most hearts never understand
To take it at God's value, but pass by
The offered wealth with unrewarded eye.

Thou art my tropics and mine Italy;
  To look at thee unlocks a warmer clime; 20
    The eyes thou givest me
  Are in the heart, and heed not space or time:
Not in mid June the golden-cuirassed bee
  Feels a more summer-like warm ravishment
  In the white lily's breezy tent, 25
His fragrant Sybaris, than I, when first
From the dark green thy yellow circles burst.

Then think I of deep shadows on the grass,
  Of meadows where in sun the cattle graze,
    Where, as the breezes pass, 30
  The gleaming rushes lean a thousand ways,
Of leaves that slumber in a cloudy mass,
  Or whiten in the wind, of waters blue
  That from the distance sparkle through
Some woodland gap, and of a sky above, 35
Where one white cloud like a stray lamb doth move.

My childhood's earliest thoughts are linked with thee;
  The sight of thee calls back the robin's song,
    Who, from the dark old tree
  Beside the door, sang clearly all day long, 40
And I, secure in childish piety,
  Listened as if I heard an angel sing
  With news from heaven, which he could bring
Fresh every day to my untainted ears
When birds and flowers and I were happy peers. 45

How like a prodigal doth nature seem,
  When thou, for all thy gold, so common art;

Thou teachest me to deem
More sacredly of every human heart,
Since each reflects in joy its scanty gleam 50
Of heaven, and could some wondrous secret show,
Did we but pay the love we owe,
And with a child's undoubting wisdom look
On all these living pages of God's book.

ON A PORTRAIT OF DANTE BY GIOTTO.

Can this be thou who, lean and pale,
With such immitigable eye
Didst look upon those writhing souls in bale,
And note each vengeance, and pass by
Unmoved, save when thy heart by chance 5
Cast backward one forbidden glance,
And saw Francesca, with child's glee,
Subdue and mount thy wild-horse knee,
And with proud hands control its fiery prance?

With half-drooped lids, and smooth, round brow, 10
And eye remote, that inly sees
Fair Beatrice's spirit wandering now
In some sea-lulled Hesperides,
Thou movest through the jarring street,
Secluded from the noise of feet 15
By her gift-blossom in thy hand,
Thy branch of palm from Holy Land; —
No trace is here of ruin's fiery sleet.

Yet there is something round thy lips
  That prophesies the coming doom, 20
The soft, gray herald-shadow before the eclipse
  Notches the perfect disk with gloom;
A something that would banish thee,
And thine untamed pursuer be,
  From men and their unworthy fates, 25
  Though Florence had not shut her gates,
And Grief had loosed her clutch and let thee free.

Ah! he who follows fearlessly
  The beckonings of a poet-heart
Shall wander, and without the world's decree, 30
  A banished man in field and mart;
Harder than Florence' walls the bar
Which with deaf sternness holds him far
  From home and friends, till death's release,
  And makes his only prayer for peace, 35
Like thine, scarred veteran of a lifelong war!

A FABLE FOR CRITICS.

EMERSON.

"THERE comes Emerson first, whose rich words, every one,
Are like gold nails in temples to hang trophies on,
Whose prose is grand verse, while his verse, the Lord knows,
Is some of it pr—— No, 'tis not even prose;
I'm speaking of metres; some poems have welled 5
From those rare depths of soul that have ne'er been excelled;
They're not epics, but that doesn't matter a pin,
In creating, the only hard thing 's to begin;
A grass-blade 's no easier to make than an oak;
If you've once found the way, you've achieved the grand stroke; 10
In the worst of his poems are mines of rich matter,
But thrown in a heap with a crush and a clatter;
Now it is not one thing nor another alone
Makes a poem, but rather the general tone,
The something pervading, uniting the whole, 15
The before unconceived, unconceivable soul,
So that just in removing this trifle or that, you
Take away, as it were, a chief limb of the statue;
Roots, wood, bark, and leaves singly perfect may be,
But, clapt hodge-podge together, they don't make a tree. 20

"But, to come back to Emerson (whom, by the way,
I believe we left waiting), — his is, we may say,
A Greek head on right Yankee shoulders, whose range
Has Olympus for one pole, for t'other the Exchange;
He seems to my thinking (although I'm afraid 25
The comparison must, long ere this, have been made),
A Plotinus-Montaigne, where the Egyptian's gold mist

And the Gascon's shrewd wit cheek-by-jowl coexist;
All admire, yet scarcely six converts he's got
To I don't (nor they either) exactly know what; 30
For though he builds glorious temples, 'tis odd
He leaves never a doorway to get in a god.
'Tis refreshing to old-fashioned people like me
To meet such a primitive Pagan as he,
In whose mind all creation is duly respected 35
As parts of himself — just a little projected;
And who's willing to worship the stars and the sun,
A convert to — nothing but Emerson.
So perfect a balance there is in his head,
That he talks of things sometimes as if they were dead; 40
Life, nature, love, God, and affairs of that sort,
He looks at as merely ideas; in short,
As if they were fossils stuck round in a cabinet,
Of such vast extent that our earth's a mere dab in it;
Composed just as he is inclined to conjecture her, 45
Namely, one part pure earth, ninety-nine parts pure lecturer;
You are filled with delight at his clear demonstration,
Each figure, word, gesture, just fits the occasion.
With the quiet precision of science he'll sort 'em,
But you can't help suspecting the whole a *post mortem.* 50

"There are persons, mole-blind to the soul's make and style,
Who insist on a likeness 'twixt him and Carlyle;
To compare him with Plato would be vastly fairer,
Carlyle's the more burly, but E. is the rarer;
He sees fewer objects, but clearlier, trulier, 55
If C.'s as original, E.'s more peculiar;
That he's more of a man you might say of the one,
Of the other he's more of an Emerson;

C.'s the Titan, as shaggy of mind as of limb, —
E. the clear-eyed Olympian, rapid and slim; 60
The one's two-thirds Norseman, the other half Greek,
Where the one's most abounding, the other's to seek;
C.'s generals require to be seen in the mass, —
E.'s specialties gain if enlarged by the glass;
C. gives nature and God his own fits of the blues, 65
And rims common-sense things with mystical hues, —
E. sits in a mystery calm and intense,
And looks coolly around him with sharp common-sense;
C. shows you how every-day matters unite
With the dim transdiurnal recesses of night, — 70
While E., in a plain, preternatural way,
Makes mysteries matters of mere every day;
C. draws all his characters quite *à la* Fuseli, —
He don't sketch their bundles of muscles and thews illy,
But he paints with a brush so untamed and profuse, 75
They seem nothing but bundles of muscles and thews;
E. is rather like Flaxman, lines strait and severe,
And a colorless outline, but full, round, and clear; —
To the men he thinks worthy he frankly accords
The design of a white marble statue in words. 80
C. labors to get at the centre, and then
Take a reckoning from there of his actions and men;
E. calmly assumes the said centre as granted,
And, given himself, has whatever is wanted.

"He has imitators in scores, who omit 85
No part of the man but his wisdom and wit, —
Who go carefully o'er the sky-blue of his brain,
And when he has skimmed it once, skim it again;
If at all they resemble him, you may be sure it is

Because their shoals mirror his mists and obscurities, 90
As a mud-puddle seems as deep as heaven for a minute,
While a cloud that floats o'er is reflected within it.

"There comes ——, for instance, to see him's rare sport,
Tread in Emerson's tracks with legs painfully short;
How he jumps, how he strains, and gets red in the face, 95
To keep step with the mystagogue's natural pace;
He follows as close as a stick to a rocket,
His fingers exploring the prophet's each pocket.
Fie, for shame, brother bard; with good fruit of your own,
Can't you let Neighbor Emerson's orchards alone? 100
Besides, 'tis no use, you'll not find e'en a core, —
—— has picked up all the windfalls before.
They might strip every tree, and E. never would catch 'em,
His Hesperides have no rude dragon to watch 'em;
He never suspects how the sly rogues came by 'em; 105
He wonders why 'tis there are none such his trees on,
And thinks 'em the best he has tasted this season."

BRYANT.

"THERE is Bryant, as quiet, as cool, and as dignified,
As a smooth, silent iceberg, that never is ignified,
Save when by reflection 'tis kindled o' nights 110
With a semblance of flame by the chill Northern Lights.
He may rank (Griswold says so) first bard of your nation
(There's no doubt that he stands in supreme ice-olation),
Your topmost Parnassus he may set his heel on,
But no warm applauses come, peal following peal on, — 115
He's too smooth and too polished to hang any zeal on:
Unqualified merits, I'll grant, if you choose, he has 'em,
But he lacks the one merit of kindling enthusiasm;

If he stir you at all, it is just, on my soul,
Like being stirred up by the very North Pole. 120

"He is very nice reading in summer, but *inter*
Nos, we don't want *extra* freezing in winter:
Take him up in the depth of July, my advice is,
When you feel an Egyptian devotion to ices.
But, deduct all you can, there's enough that's right good in him, 125
He has a true soul for field, river, and wood in him;
And his heart, in the midst of brick walls, or where'er it is,
Glows, softens, and thrills with the tenderest charities —
To you mortals that delve in this trade-ridden planet?
No, to old Berkshire's hills, with their limestone and granite.
If you're one who *in loco* (add *foco* here) *desipis*, 131
You will get of his outermost heart (as I guess) a piece;
But you'd get deeper down if you came as a precipice,
And would break the last seal of its inwardest fountain,
If you only could palm yourself off for a mountain. 135
Mr. Quivis, or somebody quite as discerning,
Some scholar who's hourly expecting his learning,
Calls B. the American Wordsworth; but Wordsworth
Is worth near as much as your whole tuneful herd's worth.
No, don't be absurd, he's an excellent Bryant; 140
But, my friends, you'll endanger the life of your client,
By attempting to stretch him up into a giant:
If you choose to compare him, I think there are two persons fit for a parallel — Thompson and Cowper;[1]

[1] To demonstrate quickly and easily how perversely absurd 'tis to sound this name *Cowper*,
As people in general call him named *super*,
I remark that he rhymes it himself with horse-trooper.

I don't mean exactly, — there's something of each, 145
There's T.'s love of nature, C.'s penchant to preach;
Just mix up their minds so that C.'s spice of craziness
Shall balance and neutralize T.'s turn for laziness,
And it gives you a brain cool, quite frictionless, quiet,
Whose internal police nips the bud of all riot, — 150
A brain like a permanent straight-jacket put on
The heart which strives vainly to burst off a button, —
A brain which, without being slow or mechanic,
Does more than a larger less drilled, more volcanic;
He's a Cowper condensed, with no craziness bitten 155
And the advantage that Wordsworth before him had written.

"But, my dear little bardlings, don't prick up your ears
Nor suppose I would rank you and Bryant as peers;
If I call him an iceberg, I don't mean to say
There is nothing in that which is grand in its way; 160
He is almost the one of your poets that knows
How much grace, strength, and dignity lie in Repose;
If he sometimes falls short, he is too wise to mar
His thought's modest fulness by going too far;
'Twould be well if your authors should all make a trial 165
Of what virtue there is in severe self-denial,
And measure their writings by Hesiod's staff,
Which teaches that all has less value than half."

WHITTIER.

"THERE is Whittier, whose swelling and vehement heart
Strains the straight-breasted drab of the Quaker apart, 170
And reveals the live Man, still supreme and erect,
Underneath the bemummying wrappers of sect;

There was ne'er a man born who had more of the swing
Of the true lyric bard and all that kind of thing;
And his failures arise (though perhaps he don't know it)
From the very same cause that has made him a poet, — 176
A fervor of mind which knows no separation
'Twixt simple excitement and pure inspiration,
As my Pythoness erst sometimes erred from not knowing
If 'twere I or mere wind through her tripod was blowing;
Let his mind once get head in its favorite direction 181
And the torrent of verse bursts the dams of reflection,
While, borne with the rush of the metre along,
The poet may chance to go right or go wrong,
Content with the whirl and delirium of song; 185
Then his grammar's not always correct, nor his rhymes,
And he's prone to repeat his own lyrics sometimes,
Not his best, though, for those are struck off at white-heats
When the heart in his breast like a trip-hammer beats,
And can ne'er be repeated again any more 190
Than they could have been carefully plotted before:
Like old what's-his-name there at the battle of Hastings
(Who, however, gave more than mere rhythmical bastings),
Our Quaker leads off metaphorical fights
For reform and whatever they call human rights, 195
Both singing and striking in front of the war,
And hitting his foes with the mallet of Thor;
Anne haec, one exclaims, on beholding his knocks,
Vestis filii tui, O leather-clad Fox?
Can that be thy son, in the battle's mid din, 200
Preaching brotherly love and then driving it in
To the brain of the tough old Goliath of sin,
With the smoothest of pebbles from Castaly's spring
Impressed on his hard moral sense with a sling?

"All honor and praise to the right-hearted bard 205
Who was true to The Voice when such service was hard,
Who himself was so free he dared sing for the slave
When to look but a protest in silence was brave;
All honor and praise to the women and men
Who spoke out for the dumb and the down-trodden then!
I need not to name them for already for each 211
I see History preparing the statue and niche;
They were harsh, but shall *you* be so shocked at hard words
Who have beaten your pruning-hooks up into swords,
Whose rewards and hurrahs men are surer to gain 215
By the reaping of men and of women than grain?
Why should *you* stand aghast at their fierce wordy war, if
You scalp one another for Bank or for Tariff?
Your calling them cut-throats and knaves all day long
Don't prove that the use of hard language is wrong; 220
While the World's heart beats quicker to think of such men
As signed Tyranny's doom with a bloody steel pen,
While on Fourth-of-Julys beardless orators fright one
With hints at Harmodius and Aristogeiton,
You need not look shy at your sisters and brothers 225
Who stab with sharp words for the freedom of others;—
No, a wreath, twine a wreath for the loyal and true
Who, for sake of the many, dared stand with the few,
Not of blood-spattered laurel for enemies braved,
But of broad, peaceful oak-leaves for citizens saved!" 230

HAWTHORNE.

"THERE is Hawthorne, with genius so shrinking and rare
That you hardly at first see the strength that is there;
A frame so robust, with a nature so sweet,
So earnest, so graceful, so solid, so fleet,

Is worth a descent from Olympus to meet; 235
'Tis as if a rough oak that for ages had stood,
With his gnarled bony branches like ribs of the wood,
Should bloom after cycles of struggle and scathe,
With a single anemone trembly and rathe;
His strength is so tender, his wildness so meek, 240
That a suitable parallel sets one to seek, —
He's a John Bunyan Fouqué a Puritan Tieck;
When Nature was shaping him, clay was not granted
For making so full-sized a man as she wanted,
So, to fill out her model, a little she spared 245
From some finer-grained stuff for a woman prepared,
And she could not have hit a more excellent plan
For making him fully and perfectly man.
The success of her scheme gave her so much delight,
That she tried it again, shortly after, in Dwight; 250
Only, while she was kneading and shaping the clay,
She sang to her work in her sweet childish way,
And found, when she'd put the last touch to his soul,
That the music had somehow got mixed with the whole."

POE.

"There comes Poe, with his raven, like Barnaby Rudge,
Three fifths of him genius and two fifths sheer fudge, 256
Who talks like a book of iambs and pentameters,
In a way to make people of common sense damn metres,
Who has written some things quite the best of their kind,
But the heart somehow seems all squeezed out by the mind,
Who — But hey-day! What's this? Messieurs Matthews and Poe, 261
You mustn't fling mud-balls at Longfellow so.

Does it make a man worse that his character's such
As to make his friends love him (as you think) too much?
Why, there is not a bard at this moment alive 265
More willing than he that his fellows should thrive;
While you are abusing him thus, even now
He would help either one of you out of a slough;
You may say that he's smooth and all that till you're hoarse,
But remember that elegance also is force; 270
After polishing granite as much as you will
The heart keeps its tough old persistency still;
Deduct all you can, *that* still keeps you at bay;
Why, he'll live till men weary of Collins and Gray.
I'm not over fond of Greek metres in English, 275
To me rhyme's a gain, so it be not too jinglish,
And your modern hexameter verses are no more
Like Greek ones than sleek Mr. Pope is like Homer;
As the roar of the sea to the coo of a pigeon is,
So, compared to your moderns, sounds old Melesigenes; 280
I may be too partial, the reason, perhaps, o't is
That I've heard the old blind man recite his own rhapsodies,
And my ear with that music impregnate may be,
Like the poor exiled shell with the soul of the sea,
Or as one can't bear Strauss when his nature is cloven 285
To its deeps within deeps by the stroke of Beethoven;
But, set that aside, and 'tis truth that I speak,
Had Theocritus written in English, not Greek,
I believe that his exquisite sense would scarce change a line
In that rare, tender, virgin-like pastoral Evangeline. 290
That's not ancient nor modern, its place is apart
Where time has no sway, in the realm of pure Art,
"Tis a shrine of retreat from Earth's hubbub and strife
As quiet and chaste as the author's own life."

IRVING.

"WHAT! Irving? thrice welcome, warm heart and fine brain, 295
You bring back the happiest spirit from Spain,
And the gravest sweet humor that ever were there
Since Cervantes met death in his gentle despair;
Nay, don't be embarrassed, nor look so beseeching, —
I shan't run directly against my own preaching, 300
And, having just laughed at their Raphaels and Dantes,
Go to setting you up beside matchless Cervantes,
But allow me to speak what I honestly feel, —
To a true poet-heart add the fun of Dick Steele,
Throw in all of Addison, *minus* the chill, 305
With the whole of that partnership's stock and good-will,
Mix well, and, while stirring, hum o'er as a spell,
The fine *old* English Gentleman, simmer it well,
Sweeten just to your own private liking, then strain,
That only the finest and clearest remain, 310
Let it stand out of doors till a soul it receives
From the warm lazy sun loitering down through green leaves,
And you'll find a choice nature, not wholly deserving
A name either English or Yankee, — just Irving."

HOLMES.

"THERE'S Holmes, who is matchless among you for wit;
A Leyden-jar always full-charged, from which flit 316
The electrical tingles of hit after hit;
In long poems 'tis painful sometimes, and invites
A thought of the way the new Telegraph writes,

Which pricks down its little sharp sentences spitefully 320
As if you got more than you'd title to rightfully,
And you find yourself hoping its wild father Lightning
Would flame in for a second and give you a fright'ning.
He has perfect sway of what *I* call a sham metre,
But many admire it, the English pentameter, 325
And Campbell, I think, wrote most commonly worse,
With less nerve, swing, and fire in the same kind of verse,
Nor e'er achieved aught in't so worthy of praise
As the tribute of Holmes to the grand Marseillaise.
You went crazy last year over Bulwer's New Timon; — 330
Why, if B., to the day of his dying, should rhyme on,
Heaping verses on verses and tomes upon tomes,
He could ne'er reach the best point and vigor of Holmes.
His are just the fine hands, too, to weave you a lyric
Full of fancy, fun, feeling, or spiced with satiric 335
In a measure so kindly, you doubt if the toes
That are trodden upon are your own or your foes'."

LOWELL.

"THERE is Lowell, who's striving Parnassus to climb
With a whole bale of *isms* tied together with rhyme,
He might get on alone, spite of brambles and boulders, 340
But he can't with that bundle he has on his shoulders,
The top of the hill he will ne'er come nigh reaching
Till he learns the distinction 'twixt singing and preaching;
His lyre has some chords that would ring pretty well,
But he'd rather by half make a drum of the shell, 345
And rattle away till he's as old as Methusalem,
At the head of a march to the last new Jerusalem."

WHAT MR. ROBINSON THINKS.

GUVENER B. is a sensible man;
He stays to his home an' looks arter his folks;
He draws his furrer ez straight ez he can,
An' into nobody's tater-patch pokes;
But John P. 5
Robinson he
Sez he wunt vote fer Guvener B.

My! ain't it terrible? Wut shall we du?
We can't never choose him o' course, — thet's flat;
Guess we shall hev to come round (don't you?) 10
An' go in fer thunder an' guns, an' all that;
Fer John P.
Robinson he
Sez he wunt vote fer Guvener B.

Gineral C. is a dreffle smart man: 15
He's been on all sides thet give places or pelf;
But consistency still wuz a part of his plan, —
He's ben true to *one* party, — an' thet is himself: —
So John P.
Robinson he 20
Sez he shall vote fer Gineral C.

Gineral C. he goes in fer the war;
He don't vally principle more'n an old cud;
Wut did God make us raytional creeturs fer,
But glory an' gunpowder, plunder an' blood? 25
So John P.
Robinson he
Sez he shall vote fer Gineral C.

We were gittin' on nicely up here to our village,
With good old idees o' wut's right an' wut ain't, 30
We kind o' thought Christ went agin war an' pillage,
An' thet eppyletts worn't the best mark of a saint;
But John P.
Robinson he
Sez this kind o' thing's an exploded idee. 35

The side of our country must ollers be took,
An' Presidunt Polk, you know, *he* is our country.
An' the angel thet writes all our sins in a book
Puts the *debit* to him, an' to us the *per contry;*
An' John P. 40
Robinson he
Sez this is his view o' the thing to a T.

Parson Wilbur he calls all these argimunts lies;
Sez they're nothin' on airth but jest *fee, faw, fum:*
An' thet all this big talk of our destinies 45
Is half on it ign'ance, an' t'other half rum;
But John P.
Robinson he
Sez it ain't no sech thing; an', of course, so must we.

Parson Wilbur sez *he* never heerd in his life 50
Thet th' Apostles rigged out in their swaller-tailed coats,
An' marched round in front of a drum an' a fife,
To git some on 'em office, an' some on 'em votes;
But John P.
Robinson he 55
Sez they didn't know everythin' down in Judee.

Wal, it's a marcy we've gut folks to tell us
  The rights an' the wrongs o' these matters, I vow, —
God sends country lawyers, an' other wise fellers,
  To start the world's team wen it gits in a slough; 60
    Fer John P.
    Robinson he
  Sez the world'll go right, ef he hollers out Gee!

THE COURTIN'.

ZEKLE crep' up, quite unbeknown,
  An' peeked in thru the winder,
And there sot Huldy all alone,
  'ith no one nigh to hender.

Agin' the chimbly crooknecks hung,
  An' in amongst 'em rusted
The old queen's-arm thet gran'ther Young
  Fetched back from Concord busted.

The walnut logs shot sparkles out
  Towards the pootiest, bless her! 10
An' leetle fires danced all about
  The chiny on the dresser.

The very room, coz she was in,
  Looked warm frum floor to ceilin',
And she looked full as rosy agin 15
  Ez th' apples she was peelin'.

She heerd a foot an' knowed it tu,
  A-raspin' on the scraper, —
All ways to once her feelins flew
  Like sparks in burnt-up paper. 20

He kin' o' l'itered on the mat,
  Some doubtfle o' the seekle;
His heart kep' goin' pitypat,
  But hern went pity Zekle.

And yet she gin her cheer a jerk 25
  Ez though she wished him furder,
An' on her apples kep' to work
  Ez ef a wager spurred her.

"You want to see my Pa, I spose?"
  "Well, no; I come designin'—" 30
"To see my Ma? She's sprinklin' clo'es
  Agin tomorrow's i'nin'."

He stood a spell on one foot fust,
  Then stood a spell on t'other,
An' on which one he felt the wust 35
  He couldn't ha' told ye, nuther.

Sez he, "I'd better call agin";
  Sez she, "Think likely, *Mister*";
The last word pricked him like a pin,
  An'—wal, he up an' kist her. 40

When Ma bimeby upon 'em slips,
  Huldy sot pale as ashes,
All kind o' smily round the lips
  An' teary round the lashes.

Her blood riz quick, though, like the tide 45
  Down to the Bay o' Fundy,
An' all I know is they wuz cried
  In meetin', come nex' Sunday.

NOTES.

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL. (Pages 1–13.)

LINES 1–8. What is the poet's purpose in the first eight lines? Is the musing organist necessary as a key to the structure of the poem? Does the description give necessary color, prepare an atmosphere, or does it delay the poem proper?

9–20. The preacher and poet were finely interwoven in Lowell's nature. His verse frequently reveals precepts of conduct or blazons a moral truth. Divest these lines of their figure, and word the lesson which Lowell would have them teach. Compare Shakespeare's "sermons in stones," for a suggestion of moral finger-posts in nature. Pupils should be required to put in writing, in a single topic sentence, the ideas contained in these lines. Only by a full discussion in the class can a proper interpretation of the poet's thought be assured.

9. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." — WORDSWORTH, *Intimations of Immortality.*

12. **We Sinais climb**: where we might know the will of the Father, as Moses on the mountain received the law for his people.

17. **the druid wood**: to the druids, the oak was a symbol of God; the clinging mistletoe, of man's dependence upon the Divine Being. The mysterious and awful ceremonies of the priests were held in the heart of groves of oak.

18. **benedicite**: "Praise ye the Lord." "Benedicite omnia opera domini." Read Psalm cxlviii.

21–32. Express the central thought in a single sentence, as directed in the note to lines 9–20. What use is made of these two stanzas (9–20 and 21–32), in the development of the poem?

27. **cap and bells**: the insignia of a fool.

33 ff. And what is so rare as a day in June? etc.: Stedman calls this landscape poetry. Expand the idea of his adjective.

"If it were early June, the rows of horse-chestnuts along the fronts of these houses showed, through every crevice of their dark heap of foliage and on the end of every drooping limb, a cone of pearly flowers, while the hill behind was white or rosy with the crowding blooms of various fruit trees. There is no sound, unless a horseman clatters over the loose planks of the bridge, while his antipodal shadow glides silently over the mirrored bridge below, or unless, —

> "O winged rapture, feathered soul of spring,
> Blithe voice of woods, fields, waters, all in one,
> Pipe blown through by the warm, mild breath of June
> Shepherding her white flocks of woolly clouds,
> The bobolink has come, and climbs the wind
> With rippling wings that quiver not for flight,
> But only joy, or, yielding to its will,
> Runs down, a brook of laughter, through the air."
>
> —LOWELL, *Fireside Travels*, 1864.

49–56. Is this bubbling bird carol in any way analogous to the poet's rhapsody over the resistless joy of the spring?

55. Scientists say that the song of the male bird, the call to his mate, is loud, clear, and distinctive, while the gentle note of the female is only loud enough to answer the male or to instruct her young.

57–60. Vary the expression of these four lines, in order to be sure of the thought.

57–79. Contrast these lines with the solemn stanzas of Bryant's autumn verse: —

> "The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year,
> Of wailing winds and naked woods, and meadows brown and sere.
> Heaped in the hollows of the grove, the autumn leaves lie dead;
> They rustle to the eddying gust, and to the rabbit's tread.
> The robin and the wren are flown, and from the shrubs the jay,
> And from the wood-top calls the crow through all the gloomy day."
>
> — *The Death of the Flowers.*

Analyze the stanza for the means used by Lowell to produce his effect; compare Bryant's method.

96 ff. Read Tennyson's *The Holy Grail* for the story of Sir Percivale, Sir Bors, Sir Galahad, and Lancelot.

"Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail:
For waked at dead of night, I heard a sound
As of a silver horn from o'er the hills
Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's use
To hunt by moonlight'; and the slender sound
As from a distance beyond distance grew
Coming upon me. O never harp nor horn,
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,
Was like that music as it came; and then
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver beam,
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed
With rosy colors leaping on the wall;
And then the music faded, and the Grail
Pass'd and the beam decay'd, and from the walls
The rosy quiverings died into the night."

—TENNYSON, *The Holy Grail.*

". . . I, Galahad, saw the Grail,
The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine:
I saw the fiery face as of a child
That smote itself into the bread, and went;
And hither am I come: and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
This Holy Thing, fail'd from my side nor come
Cover'd, but moving with me night and day,
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blackened marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode."

—TENNYSON, *The Holy Grail.*

Sir Percivale, at the assumption of Sir Galahad into the Spiritual City, sees the Grail as it disappears forever from the sight of men.

> "And o'er his head the holy vessel hung
> Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
> For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.
> Then in a moment when they blazed again
> Opening, I saw the least of little stars
> Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star
> I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
> And gateways in a glory like one pearl —
> No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints —
> Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot
> A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
> Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
> Which never eyes on earth again shall see."
>
> —TENNYSON, *The Holy Grail.*

A complete analysis of the Arthurian Romances, including the traditions of the Grail as treated by early French and English writers, is to be found under "Romance," in the *Encyclopædia Britannica.*

Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrim, who during the life of Jesus had been afraid to confess belief in Him, boldly avowed his faith at the crucifixion and begged from Pilate the body of our Lord, which he laid in his own tomb. It is said that Joseph was given *son raissel*, the Holy Grail, in which he collected the sacred blood of the Saviour which gushed from the spear wound inflicted by Longinus, and that this holy treasure remained in Joseph's hands during the forty three years of his imprisonment by the Jews. Because of its possession, the years seemed but three. After his release by Vespasian, he became the leader of a band of apostles, who brought Christianity to Britain and built the abbey of Glastonbury, on the south shore of England. Legend says that both the Holy Grail and the spear of Longinus were long enshrined here, until removed by supernatural power.

"According to the mythology of the Romancers, the San Greal, or Holy Grail, was the cup out of which Jesus Christ partook of the last

supper with his disciples. It was brought into England by Joseph of Arimathea, and remained there, an object of pilgrimage and adoration, for many years, in the keeping of his lineal descendants. It was incumbent upon those who had charge of it to be chaste in thought, word, and deed; but, one of the keepers having broken this condition, the Holy Grail disappeared. From that time it was a favorite enterprise of the knights of Arthur's court to go in search of it. Sir Galahad was at last successful in finding it, as may be read in the seventeenth book of the *Romance of King Arthur*. Tennyson has made Sir Galahad the subject of one of the most exquisite of his poems.

"The plot (if I may give that name to anything so slight) of the following poem is my own, and, to serve its purposes, I have enlarged the circle of competition in search of the miraculous cup in such a manner as to include not only other persons than the heroes of the Round Table, but also a period of time subsequent to the date of King Arthur's reign." — LOWELL.

> "The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
> Drank at the last sad supper with His own.
> This, from the blessed land of Aromat —
> After the day of darkness, when the dead
> Went wandering o'er Moriah — the good saint
> Arimathean Joseph, journeying brought
> To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
> Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.
> And there awhile it bode; and if a man
> Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once
> By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
> Grew to such evil that the holy cup
> Was caught away to Heaven, and disappear'd."
>
> — TENNYSON, *The Holy Grail.*

99. **Grail:** from low Latin *cratella*, 'a chalice'; there is no sufficient ground for the etymology which traces the word to *agreer*, 'to please,' from the gracious influence of the cup.

107. Does Lowell ennoble the commonplace literary device, a dream, by its use in such exalted poetry?

109–127. Does this word-painting suggest an artist's canvas? Analyze the description, for the method employed in producing the picture.

116. North Countree: of indefinite location, used by Hans Andersen and others in the lore of fairy tale.

128 ff. Because of the vividness of every line, it is hard to remember that this is still the vision of the slumbering knight.

130. maiden knight: untried; the idea is repeated in "unscarred mail."

159 ff. "Lowell's New England character forced him to be both teacher and preacher."

168. Does this imply that, when the thread of charity runs through the fabric of our characters, the Divine is in each of us?

174–180. Compare with the first stanza of Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes* for the effect produced; which gives the more genuine sense of cold? Why?

> "St. Agnes' Eve, — ah, bitter chill it was!
> The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
> The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
> And silent was the flock in woolly fold;
> Numb were the beadsman's fingers while he told
> His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
> Like pious incense from a censer old,
> Seemed taking flight for heaven without a death,
> Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith."

174–210. The joy of the poet is as evident in his description of winter as of June. Compare the two for the feeling and the art.

176. open wold: the unwooded plain.

184. groined: the intersection of the cylindrical surfaces of vaulted ceilings produces angles called 'groins.' See the dictionary illustrations.

190. forest-crypt: the name 'crypt' was given to a subterranean chapel of the Gothic churches; in a broader way it is applied to an underground vault, usually for the dead.

196. arabesques: fantastic, ornamental patterns.

211–239. What is the purpose of these lines? Contrast them

with Stanzas II, III, and IV of *The Eve of St. Agnes.* What is the difference in feeling? in result? Which do you like better? Why?

213. **corbel**: 'a bracket'; derivation, a diminutive of Latin, *corbis;* French, *corbeille*, 'a basket.' See *Century Dictionary.* "A piece of stone, wood, or iron projecting from the vertical face of a wall to support some superincumbent object."

> "The corbells were carved grotesque and grim."
>
> —SCOTT, *Lay of the Last Minstrel.*

216. **Yule-log**: burnt in Christmas hospitality, as in the olden times it was, in feasting the god Thor.

233. **seneschal**: literally, 'old servant'; Latin, *seniscalcus.* The steward of royal palace and princely hall, whose duties were those of a major-domo, managing feasts and dispensing hospitality. Sometimes higher dignity, even military command, was accorded to this officer of the household.

255. **surcoat**: *sur*, 'over'; *cote*, 'coat'; a loose outer garment worn over chain armor, from the thirteenth century to the advent of plate armor in the fifteenth. Among the Crusaders it was not only emblazoned with the cross, but by its cut, color, and military adornment distinctively indicated the followers of the various great leaders.

291. **leprosie**: is there other reason for the form of the word than the rhyme?

305. **stood before him glorified**: there are many stories of Christ's revelation of himself, after humble human service done in his name.

The Legend of Saint Christopher ('Christ-bearer') tells us that Offero, a giant of the land of Canaan, resolved to serve only masters of fearless heart and mighty power. Wandering to the court of a king of great wealth and dominion, he entered his service. But when he discovered that his royal master, cowering, crossed himself in terror at the name of Satan, he deserted him to join the higher power. Satan he served, but only till he found that the cross inspired him with craven fear; then, guided by a holy man, Offero became a follower of the Great King, rendering humble service in bearing on his mighty shoulders, through a rushing stream, the frail, the weak, and the old, at a ford where many precious lives had been lost.

At length came the giant's trial. Through the howling night storm a plaintive voice: "Offero, wilt thou carry me over?" With difficulty he found a little child, whom he lifted to his shoulder. Seizing a great pine tree to serve him as a staff, he began the passage. The storm grew fiercer, the winds buffeted hard, crashing thunder and blinding lightning came, the child grew to superhuman weight; though fearing to sink, the giant, struggling hard, reached the opposite shore.

"Whom have I borne? Had it been the world, it could not have been more heavy."

"Me thou hast desired to serve, and I have accepted thee. Thou hast borne not only the whole world, but Him who made it, upon thy shoulders. As a sign of my power and of my approbation of thee, fix thou thy staff in the earth, and it shall grow and bear fruit." Then Offero knew that it was Christ whom he had borne, and he fell down and worshipped Him. — Summarized from Mrs. Clement's *A Handbook of Legendary Art.*

307. Beautiful Gate: read The Acts iii. 2.

336. the hangbird: the orchard oriole, or Baltimore oriole.

SUMMER STORM. (Pages 14–17.)

Lowell's comment upon Bryant (p. 42, line 126) may be repeated of himself: —

> "He has a true soul for field, river, and wood in him."

What is the effect of the description upon the imagination? Does it create the poet's own glow of emotions? Is the development, through the approach of the storm, its burst of crashing fury, and succeeding quiet, vigorous and absorbing?

Study the details of the picture; first, the sheep and the loose-planked bridge, the idle tide, marked with the water rat's wake, the great storm cloud in the west; then the storm's burst; and finally, study the poet's art in closing with the quiet moon.

Read the poem aloud; are the melody of the line, the rhythm, and figure equal to the sympathy of the poet's soul with a mood of nature?

73. gouts: Latin *gustus*, 'taste'; 'drops,' by secondary meaning.

ALLEGRA. (Pages 17–18.)

The name is from the Latin *alacris*, 'happy,' 'cheerful.'

Is this a poem upon temperament?

3. **Hebe**: daughter of Juno, cup-bearer to the Olympian gods, whose fabled power was to restore to the aged the charm of youth.

> "Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
> Jest, and youthful jollity,
> Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
> Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,
> Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
> And love to live in dimple sleek."
>
> — MILTON, *L'Allegro.*

THE ROSE. (Pages 18–21.)

Study the rhythm of the ballad: is it faultless? Is the verse flowing and melodious?

Compare p. 19, lines 13 ff., —

> "Life is vain and love is hollow," etc.,

with p. 20, lines 61 ff., —

> "Life is joy and love is power," etc.,

If this is both "singing and preaching," express in your own words the poet's text and discuss its force.

RHŒCUS. (Pages 21–26.)

Rhœcus: pronounced Rē′-kus. This tale, with minor variations, is a bit of classic mythology. See Bulfinch's *Age of Fable.* According to the Greeks, the dryad pledged her love to Rhœcus, exacted his constancy, and agreed that a bee should, as her messenger, summon him at her pleasure. Rhœcus, absorbed in a game of draughts, once bruised and brushed aside the bee; the nymph's love turned at once to bitterness, and in anger she deprived Rhœcus of his eyes.

Keats's *Lamia* (1819) was perhaps the inspiration of this poem.

Does the introduction of the first thirty-five lines, through its didactic character, delay the poem and lessen its beauty?

Stedman contrasts *Rhœcus* as a piece of art work with Landor's *Hamadryad.* "Landor worked as a Grecian might, giving the tale in

chiselled verse, with no curious regard for its teachings. Its beauty is enough for him, and there it stands — a Periclean vase."

— *American Poets.*

18. **hazel twig**: this is the "staff" of the Bible (Hosea iv. 12), the "virgula divina" of Cicero, the "divining rod" of more recent times. When held lightly between the hands, the rod, shaped like a Y, turned downwards as its holder walked over precious metal, buried treasure, or secret springs.

136–139. We spirits only show to gentle eyes.
We ever ask an undivided love.
And he who scorns the least of Nature's works
Is thenceforth exiled and shut out from all.

Here lies the moral of the tale; does the wording of it overweight the poem? To aid your decision, it is perhaps admissible to compare these lines with the *Lamia* — noting its simplicity, its lack of moralizing and reflection, its absence of preaching.

TO A PINE TREE. (Pages 26–28.)

"My childhood's earliest thoughts are linked with thee;
The sight of thee calls back the robin's song,
Who from the dark old tree
Beside the door, sang clearly all day long,
And I, secure in childish piety,
Listened as if I heard an angel sing
With news from heaven, which he could bring
Fresh every day to my untainted ears
When birds and flowers and I were happy peers."

Is there repeated evidence that Lowell, both as child and man, was filled with love of bird and tree and was taught by them to deem "More sacredly of every human heart"?

Does the diction fill the ear richly? Are the rhymes perfect? Compare **valleys** and **palace** (p. 27, lines 11 and 13).

1. **Katahdin**: the mountains of Maine are superb, through the grandeur of the pines. Katahdin is the king of the hills (5325 feet in height).

TO THE PAST. (Pages 28–30.)

13. **Asser**: 353–427 A.D.; a rabbi known chiefly as the author and compiler of the Babylonian *Talmud.*

58. **Fortunate Isles**: the Greeks located the Elysian Fields in the Canaries, into which "happy islands of the blest" mighty heroes passed without dying.

THE OAK. (Pages 31–32.)

Does the poet's joy in wood and tree dominate him in *The Oak*, or have we to regret the lack of warmth, his "tabulation and enumeration," which are neither art nor emotion?

40. **Puck**:

> ". . . Are you not he
> That frights the maidens of the villagery;
> Skims milk, and sometimes labors in the quern,
> And bootless makes the breathless housewife's churn;
> And sometime makes the drink to bear no barm;
> Misleads night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?"

41. **Lord, all thy works are lessons**: this is to confound the moralist and the poet.

"Whenever a work of art is the vehicle for an idea or purpose outside of its essential form, it falls short of being a pure art creation, and fails in its appeal to the æsthetic mood, whilst, be it conceded, it may serve some other but secondary purpose, which belongs to the province of the archæologist, the art historian, and the collector." — WALDSTEIN.

THE BIRCH TREE. (Pages 33–34.)

12. **Dryad**: the Dryads were the nymphs of the trees, making them their abode and dying in them. See p. 23, line 56, —

> "Rhœcus, I am the Dryad of this tree."

TO THE DANDELION. (Pages 34–36.)

6. **Eldorado**: *el dorado*, 'golden country'; a part of South America, named by the Spaniards.

26. **Sybaris**: a city of Greece, 720–510 B.C. "In the sixth century probably no Hellenic city could compare with its wealth and splendor."

ON A PORTRAIT OF DANTE BY GIOTTO. (Pages 36–37.)

Read Mrs. Oliphant's *Makers of Florence*, Chapters I–III, for Dante's public life and exile; Chapter IV, for the work of Giotto, master painter, builder, and sculptor.

The burly peasant Giotto's "first great public commission was to paint a Paradise over the altar in the chapel of the Podesta, in the old, stern Bargello palace. . . . What more natural than that Giotto, peacefully painting the saints of his Paradise, should introduce the portraits of his friends among them, and above all that special friend whose notice of the young painter was so flattering, and whose acquaintance, at once as a statesman, ambassador, and poet, it was a pride to possess? . . . With a painter's admiration for the beautiful countenance, yet unworn with anything worse than the sweet sorrows of a visionary love, Giotto set Dante in the front of his group, and thus preserved to us forever such a softened representation of the poet's face, and along with it of his character, as has been most gratefully received by all lovers of Dante." — *Makers of Florence.*

12. **Beatrice**: the poetic story of Dante's exalted yet unrequited love for Beatrice Portinari, as told in the *Vita Nuova*, is still an inspiration to poets and an immortal part of literature.

13. **Hesperides**: the golden apples which Juno received as her marriage gift were guarded by three sisters, aided by the dragon Ladon, in some remote, mysterious spot known as the "Garden of the Hesperides." See *Love's Labor's Lost*, IV, 3.

26. The Neri, a faction of the Guelph party, condemned Dante to perpetual banishment. His poverty and many afflictions were the inspiration for much of his poetry.

28 ff. Are the poet-souled necessarily isolated from the world of less gifted men?

A FABLE FOR CRITICS. (Pages 38–49.)

The selections, though each is complete, make but a fragment of the poem.

READER! *walk up at once (it will soon be too late)*
and buy at a perfectly ruinous rate

A

FABLE FOR CRITICS.

OR, BETTER,

(*I like, as a thing that the reader's first fancy may strike,*
an old-fashioned title-page,
such as presents a tabular view of the volume's contents,)

A GLANCE
AT A FEW OF OUR LITERARY PROGENIES
(*Mrs. Malaprop's word*)

From

THE TUB OF DIOGENES;

A VOCAL AND MUSICAL MEDLEY

THAT IS

A SERIES OF JOKES

By a Wonderful Quiz,

Who accompanies himself with a rub-a-dub-dub, full of spirit and grace,
on the top of the tub.

Set forth in October, the 31st day,
In the year '48, G. P. Putnam, Broadway.

This humorous title-page was followed, in the original edition of 1848, by a preface which, though light in tone, states with sincerity

that "All the characters sketched in this slight *jeu d'esprit* . . . are *meant* to be faithful." (The italics are Lowell's.)

1. **Emerson**: "I know what is meant by a caricature and what by a portrait." Which is given here?

27. **Plotinus**: 204–270 A.D.; a Greek philosopher, who was born in Egypt. He was a teacher of the neo-Platonic philosophy in Rome for twenty-five years.

"He was intensely religious, and if he had come a century later would, instead of a heathen philosopher, have been one of the first names among the saints of the church." — HALLAM.

Montaigne: 1533–1592; a Gascon philosopher and essayist, whose writings have had an extraordinary influence upon the taste and opinions of Europe.

"The Essays are an interesting soliloquy on every random topic that comes into his head, treating everything without ceremony, yet with masculine sense. There have been men with deeper insight, but, one would say, never a man with such abundance of thought: he is never dull, never insincere, and has the genius to make the reader care for all that he cares for." — EMERSON.

51 ff. What is your opinion of the comparison with Carlyle — is it mere words, or shrewd analysis?

112. **Griswold**: a Baptist minister, of a kindly and impartial mind, who was the author of *Prose Writers of America* (1842).

121. **inter nos**: just between ourselves.

131. **in loco (add foco here) desipis**: you who at the proper time (add "by the fireside" here) indulge in trifling.

136. **Mr. Quivis**: Mr. "So-and-so."

144. **Thompson** and **Cowper** were great rivals in poetic description of rural scenes; the first, in the *Seasons* (1730), maintains an "unvaried pomp of diction," while the latter wrote, in all his poems, with "manly and idiomatic simplicity."

167. **Hesiod**: a Greek poet, 800 B.C.

198. **Anne haec, . . . Vestis filii tui**: 'can this be the dress of thy son?'

203. **Castaly's spring**: a sacred fountain springing from the side of Mount Parnassus, which inspired those who drank from it with the gift of poetry.

224. **Harmodius** and **Aristogeiton**: Athenian heroes who, conspiring against the tyrannical Pisistratidae, were martyred, 525 B.C.

242. **Fouqué**: 1777–1843; a German writer, whose powerful imagination was thrilled by Northern traditions. *Undine* is one of the most exquisite conceptions of his rare genius. **Tieck**: 1773–1853; Ludvig Tieck, a German poet and novelist, who wrote much that was weird and gloomy.

250. **Dwight**: 1786–1850; Sereno Edwards, was the son of President Timothy Dwight of Yale, and grandson of Jonathan Edwards; he practiced law for ten years, then became the pastor of the Park Street Church in Boston. He abandoned both professions to become a teacher, and afterward was president of Hamilton College.

261. **Matthews**: Cornelius, author of novels and plays, and magazine writer. Read Poe's *Mr. Longfellow and Other Plagiarists*, which caused Lowell's protest against the flinging of "mud-balls."

280. **Old Melesigenes**: 'Meles-born.' Homer, by tradition, was born in Ionia, upon the banks of the Meles.

290. Is this estimate of *Evangeline* just and adequate?

295. **Irving**; the years from 1826 to 1829, which Irving spent in Spain, were years of arduous literary toil. *The Life of Columbus*, *The Conquest of Granada*, and *The Alhambra*, which Prescott called a Spanish *Sketch-Book*, were the fruits of his labor.

326. **Campbell**: read *The Battle of the Baltic*, to appreciate the fire of the poet.

WHAT MR. ROBINSON THINKS. (Pages 50–52.)

1. **Guvener B.**: George N. Briggs was the Whig governor of Massachusetts, from 1843 to 1851.

15. **Gineral C.**: Caleb Cushing, who was a stanch supporter of the Mexican War. He raised and equipped a regiment, which he commanded in the campaign of 1847. Upon his return from the war, he was a candidate for governor of Massachusetts.

This poem, with its dialect, argument, and satire, is typical of the strength of the *Biglow Papers*, from which it is selected.

Lowell's title-page to the first edition of the *Biglow Papers* was followed by droll "Notices of the Press," written by Lowell himself,

satirizing newspaper puff or condemnation of an author's effort. The selections reveal, under the guise of humor, a powerful use of ridicule, which is perhaps the strongest characteristic of the *Papers*. The title-page and some of the notices are as follows: —

THE

BIGLOW PAPERS,

EDITED,

WITH AN INTRODUCTION, NOTES, GLOSSARY, AND COPIOUS INDEX,

BY

HOMER WILBUR, A.M.,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN JALAAM

And (prospective) member of many literary, learned, and scientific societies.

NOTICES OF AN INDEPENDENT PRESS.

From the Universal Literary Universe.

Full of passages which rivet the attention of the reader. . . . Under a rustic garb, sentiments are conveyed which should be committed to the memory and graven on the heart of every moral and social being. . . We consider this a *unique* performance. . . . We hope to see it soon introduced into our common schools. . . . Mr. Wilbur has performed his duties as editor with excellent taste and judgment. . . . This is a vein which we hope to see successfully prosecuted. . . . We hail the appearance of this work as a long stride towards the formation of a purely aboriginal, indigenous, native, and American literature. We rejoice to meet with an author national enough to break away from the slavish deference, too common among us, to English grammar and

orthography. . . . Where all is so good, we are at loss how to make extracts. . . . On the whole, we may call it a volume which no library, pretending to entire completeness, should fail to place upon its shelves.

From the Higginbottomopolis Snapping-turtle.

A collection of the merest balderdash and doggerel that it was ever our bad fortune to lay eyes on. The author is a vulgar buffoon, and the editor a talkative, tedious old fool. We use strong language, but should any of our readers peruse the book (from which calamity Heaven preserve them) they will find reasons for it thick as the leaves of Vallumbrozer, or, to use a still more expressive comparison, as the combined heads of author and editor. This work is wretchedly got up. . . . We should like to know how much *British gold* was pocketed by this libeller of our country and her purest patriots.

From the Saltriver Pilot and Flag of Freedom.

A volume in bad grammar and in worse taste. . . . While the pieces here collected were confined to their appropriate sphere in the corners of obscure newspapers, we considered them wholly beneath contempt, but, as the author has chosen to come forward in this public manner, he must expect the lash he so richly merits. . . . Contemptible slanders. . . . Vilest Billingsgate. . . . Has raked all the gutters of our language. . . . The most pure, upright, and consistent politicians not safe from his malignant venom. . . . General Cushing comes in for a share of his vile calumnies. . . . The *Reverend* Homer Wilbur is a disgrace to his cloth. . . .

From the Onion Grove Phœnix.

A talented young townsman of ours, recently returned from a continental tour, and who is already favorably known to our readers by his sprightly letters from abroad which have graced our columns, called at our office yesterday. We learn from him that, having enjoyed the distinguished privilege, while in Germany, of an introduction to the celebrated Von Humbug, he took the opportunity to present that eminent man with a copy of the *Biglow Papers*. The next morning he received the following note, which he has kindly furnished us for publication. We prefer to print it *verbatim*, know-

ing that our readers will readily forgive the few errors into which the illustrious writer has fallen, through ignorance of our language.

"HIGH-WORTHY MISTER!

"I shall also now especially happy starve, because I have more or less a work of one of those aboriginal Red-Men seen in which have I so deaf an interest ever taken full-worthy on the self shelf with our Gottsched to be upset.

"Pardon my in the English-speech un-practice!

"VON HUMBUG."

THE COURTIN'. (Pages 52–53.)

The Courtin' is taken from the *Biglow Papers*. The "editor" of the *Papers* makes this reference to the poem: —

"[The following genuine "notice" having met my eye, I gladly insert a portion of it here, the more especially as it contains one of Mr. Biglow's poems not elsewhere printed. — H. W.]

"*From the Jaalam Independent Blunderbuss.*

". . . But, while we lament to see our young townsman thus mingling in the heated contests of party politics, we think we detect in him the presence of talents which if properly directed might give an innocent pleasure to many. As a proof that he is competent to the production of other kinds of poetry, we copy for our readers a short fragment of a pastoral by him, the manuscript of which was loaned us by a friend. The title of it is *The Courtin'*."

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